

## Extract from Minutes of Bishop's Council Meeting held 16 February 2011:

### ITEM 4 – Communications

- 4.1 The Interim Report on communications, commissioned by the Bishop's Council in September 2010 covered communications within the Diocesan Office and from there outwards.
- 4.2 The Working Group hopes to complete the second stage of its work, on communications within Deaneries and back from benefices and parishes, by Easter. Subject to the agreement of Bishop's Council, there will need to be a third stage dealing with the website; which could start in April.
- 4.3 A fundamental conclusion from the Group was that communications is not a stand-alone subject: it must be part and parcel of the whole administrative process. For that reason, implementation of the recommendations would require not only a change in certain procedures but a whole-hearted commitment to good administration and change.
- 4.4 The Working Group sought the agreement of Bishop's Council to the report in general; the recommendations in particular, and an early start on implementation for which it would draft a timed plan.
- 4.5 The report contains a large number of recommendations which are not all of one type; some ensuring ongoing good practice, others asking for action. CWH suggested that they be referred back to the Working Group first to put into a more structured form, identifying smaller core activities.
- 4.6 GP reported that he had shown the report to Deanery Treasurers for comment/feedback, they all felt the report was a very good start. They did, however, ask GP to suggest that the Working Group provide an action plan and time frame for who should do what regarding the recommendations.
- 4.7 It was noted that the Working Group already intended to produce a 'plan of action' once Bishop's Council had agreed to the report in general, +AP lead Council's review of the recommendations:
- 4.8 **Recommendation 1:** All Boards and Committees should make it part of their routine, for both formal and informal business, to consider for all items what has to be communicated, how, when and to whom. (*Report paras 23, 27*)
- a. Comment:* +A feels that this is already being done.
- 4.9 **Recommendation 2:** All Support Ministers, officers and staff should make it part of their routine, for both formal and informal business, to consider for all items with which they deal what has to be communicated, how, when and to whom. (*Report paras 24, 27*)
- a. Comment:* +AP feels that this is already being done. The line of communications within Boards is a matter of line management. However, it was agreed the links between Boards and Committees could be strengthened; resolving this is delegated back to the Working Group.
- 4.10 **Recommendation 3:** Consideration of communications under 1 and 2 above should include the need to keep colleagues informed of business, without overburdening them with irrelevant matter. (*Report paras 19, 20*)
- a. Comment:* +AP asked what is or is not relevant and felt that sometimes people are too ready to copy information to too many others.
- 4.11 **Recommendation 4:** It should also include a careful appraisal of the impact of the communication, or of the absence of communication, on those to whom it is (or is not) communicated. (*Report paras 19, 20, 23, 24*)

a. **Comment:** +AP said individual appraisal would be difficult, but people should exercise responsibility and restraint.

4.12 **Recommendation 5:** We recommend an urgent review by all staff producing material for general circulation of whether dissemination is best done themselves or centrally. (*Report paras 29*)

a. **Comment:** Boards need to ask themselves this ‘internally’. PP said that it may be resolved when carrying out the e-review. +AP reported that Worcester Diocese have a good form of diocesan mailing; fortnightly, each item with a heading and two line summary with a link to the website for further information. That mailing can cover 30 items over 2 pages, but is not onerous to check through for what is relevant. GP reported that his new Pack for PCC Treasurers is similar, with a half page of information and appropriate website links for more information and forms. RL said she receives a General Synod mailing like that also. +AM suggested Council recommends this style for Hereford’s regular mailing. GPB would not wish to micro-manage the Communications Officer, Anni Holden (AH) and recommended instead to urge and encourage such a change. Council agreed it would like a trial of such a mailing.

GPB/AH

4.13 **Recommendation 6:** So far as possible, communications should be targeted at individuals or organisations, not left for them to find on the website. Nevertheless, information should be generally available there for those seeking it, whether from without the Diocese or within. (*Report paras 22, 32*)

a. **Comment:** Council thought this was also something that Boards needed to ask themselves ‘internally’.

4.14 **Recommendation 7:** The Diocesan Communications Officer should take up with benefices the distribution of regular publications such as the Bishop’s monthly letter and the Diocesan NEWSpaper. (*Report para 54*)

a. **Comment:** AH has already written to Rural Deans about circulation of the NEWSpaper, also to the parishes. Distribution is limited as it generally seems to be handed out in church, or simply left there for people to pick up if they wish. Some parishes distribute it with the parish magazine. It could be delivered to all houses, although this is plainly not practical in all areas. Council endorsed the recommendation.

4.15 **Recommendation 8:** There should be a review of the NEWSpaper. (*Report para 54*)

a. **Comment:** Council endorsed this recommendation. PP suggested such a review wait until later in the year, say after another 2 issues, as there have not been many issues since the new style was released. Also, that would be after the Communications Group will have completed its review of the website and e-communications.

b. Agreed that the Council meeting of 26 May 11 should set up a NEWSpaper Review Group. Draft Terms of Reference (TORs) to be prepared, and suggestions of who might be on the Group, so that TORs and membership can be approved at that meeting. The review should then begin on 21 Jul 11 and report back to Bishops Council in September and/or November.

Communications Group to suggest TORs

Consider and suggest people to be included in the Group

Setting up of a NEWSpaper Review Group to be on the Agenda for 26 May 11

GWH/JEC

ALL

JEC

4.16 **Recommendation 9:** There should be a common Diocesan letterhead, augmented by information about the particular branch or parish concerned. (*Report para 48*)

a. **Comment:** ‘Branding’ of the Diocesan family was felt to be a good step forward and a common letterhead would help with this, also common email styles. It was also agreed that there would be no likelihood of identical parish notice boards throughout the Diocese, which had been suggested in the past. GPB to speak with AH about a suggested style for a common letterhead.

GPB

- 4.17 **Recommendation 10:** The Diocesan Office should use electronic communication wherever possible and a vigorous campaign should be undertaken to educate and encourage all individuals and organisations, within and without Diocesan structures, to use electronic media. (*Report para 34*)
- a. Comment:** +A said PJB, as Office Manager, to encourage Diocesan Offices to use electronic communication wherever possible, which it largely does already.  
Regarding a vigorous campaign, Council appreciates that there is a limit to what can in reality be achieved when it comes to volunteers; not everyone is able to, or wishes to, use electronic communications. There is also a problem of email ‘credibility’ – if people receive too much information, they cease to read it at all.  
ATP said that emails with multiple addressees that are not in ‘blind copy’ can be a problem, wasting ink and paper when printing hard copies.
- 4.18 **Recommendation 11:** In general, communication within the Diocesan Office, and between it and Deaneries and Benefices, should be in electronic form. Not only is that speedier and cheaper it also readily enables information to be disseminated further. (*Report para 34*)
- a. Comment:** Council accepts there are limits to what can be achieved out of the offices (as in 4.17a above), but will work towards this.
- 4.19 **Recommendation 12:** We recommend the use of targeted emails wherever possible, including the use by the Bishop of a uniquely identified email address, that makes clear that certain communications are particularly important and must be read and acted upon. (*Report para 32*)
- a. Comment:** +A will not use a different email address, but has stopped sending mailings through the Communications Officer; which had caused some confusion and possibly lead to this proposal. All the Bishop’s mailings are now sent from his office. It is believed that emails from the offices are normally targeted, but the aim is to always do better.
- 4.20 **Recommendation 13:** All appointed to salaried or stipendiary posts should be required to demonstrate at least basic capabilities in electronic communication or to agree to undertake the necessary training. Those appointed to voluntary posts should be strongly encouraged to fit themselves similarly. (*Report para 34*)
- a. Comment:** The Statements of Need for staff and clergy now includes this. Voluntary posts can only be for posts that are advertised, or staff actively sought.
- 4.21 **Recommendation 14:** When it is necessary to ask recipients of electronic communications to pass on the information to those not able to receive them there should be clarity about which recipient is asked to pass on information, and to whom. (*Report para 32*)
- a. Comment:** This is good practice anyway, but difficult to monitor.
- 4.22 **Recommendations 15-20:** these Recommendations relate to the website, which the Working Group wishes to review separately. Council approves that separate review and declined to review the current recommendations pending that review, excepting for the following:
- a. Comment:** Recommendation 17 asserted that Diocesan Minutes be placed on the website, barring certain items. Council agreed, with the proviso that they be password protected.
- 4.23 **Recommendation 21:** All matters arising with Boards, Committees or individuals should receive prompt and effective attention. Communications received which will require a reply should, unless a fixed time is given for a response, be acknowledged if not disposed of within 14 days, and an estimate given of when a full reply will be possible. Except where there are compelling reasons, replies should be sent by email. (*Report para 46*)
- a. Comment:** Good practice – agreed.
- 4.24 **Recommendation 22:** Any matter outstanding 3 months after initiation should be reported to line managers or, in the case of a Board’s business, to the Bishop’s Council. (*Report para 46*)

- a. **Comment:** Agreed
- 4.25 **Recommendation 23:** We recommend that guidance be given to all staff on that, and that the guidance be made available to Deaneries, benefices and parishes. (*Report para 46*)
- a. **Comment:** Agreed
- 4.26 **Recommendation 24:** Diocesan data bases should be harmonised, updated, and kept up to date as a matter of urgency and staff should be trained in their effective use. (*Report paras 36,37*)
- a. **Comment:** There is one main Diocesan database with all contact information. JEC has been investigating replacing it with a better, more up to date version; this investigation has been delayed due to pressure of other work. It is envisaged that an outside company will produce the database to Diocesan specification.
- b. Also the data is only ever as good as the information received, which is sporadic. Not all parishes sent in their Annual Information Returns with new committee information, or let the office know of changes as these occur. Staff had been given training on the database as and when they have made this need known; more training will likely be needed when the new database is completed.
- c. Council agreed that JEC and PJB should have some input to the Communications Group on this issue, together with someone from the Bishop's Office. **JEC/PJB**
- 4.27 **Recommendation 25:** We recommend that the Diocese introduce effective induction procedures for all staff and senior appointments. (*Report para 38*)
- a. **Comment:** This is already improving, GPB reported a very full induction programme. +AP said this would be discussed within Bishop's Staff, and with Graham Hamer (GH) for the office staff. **+AP/JEC**
- b. RDK reported that Rita Graham has a good induction pack/booklet for new Board of Education staff and will ask her to pass copies to +AP and GH. **RDK**
- 4.28 **Recommendation 26:** We recommend that the Archdeacons pay particular attention to cases where full synergy between Rural Deans and Lay Co-Chairmen seems impaired, and strive by all means to apply the necessary remedies, by counselling, education or otherwise. (*Report para 50*)
- a. **Comment:** Agreed.
- 4.29 **Recommendation 27:** We recommend the examination of the possibility of a note to clergy from the Bishop (or Archdeacons) each month advising them about those who are ill/off duty/indisposed/on sabbatical is desirable. That might be linked to a monthly list from the Bishop's office listing clergy moves and appointments, also vacancies (present or forthcoming). (*Report para 26*)
- a. **Comment:** This had been suggested to Rural Deans and Lay Co Chairs who overwhelmingly rejected the idea. The rejection was on several grounds; issues of privacy, information not always being up-to-date or even available, and to save +AP an unnecessary additional task. Not agreed.
- 4.30 **Recommendation 28:** An area of particular difficulty and sensitivity has been the Diocese's calls for funds. This is an important area. It may be a source of great resentment as regards parishes and their perceptions. There may be difficulties in being fully open on such matters as staff remuneration. Nevertheless, being as informative as possible will be crucial to generating confidence and maintaining good will in the difficult times that lie ahead. (*Report paras 11, 12*)
- a. **Comment:** Council only agreed that the Diocese ought to express its thanks more.

- 4.31 **Recommendation 29:** A senior person should be charged with carrying through and overseeing the necessary reforms and education. (*Report para 56*)
- a. Comment:* There is someone in mind for this task, but no details were given.
- 4.32 **Recommendation 30:** These recommendations, if endorsed by Bishop's Council, should be promulgated by the Diocesan Bishop and guidance issued in his name. (*Report para 56*)
- a. Comment:* Agreed.
- 4.33 **Recommendation 31:** Bishop's Council should monitor the implementation of these recommendations as part of their quarterly review of Boards' work. (*Report para 56*)
- a. Comment:* Agreed. Chairmen of Boards to report back to Bishop's Council accordingly; having asked their Boards if their communications are good – and using this report as a guideline for testing that. First report to Bishop's Council in May 2011.
- 4.34 SED expressed her thanks to the Communications Working Group for their work and impressive, well written report. +AP to write a letter expressing Council's thanks. **+AP**
- 4.35 Council's reaction to the report to be given to the Working Group. The Report to be posted onto the website, but without a response at this stage. **PJB**